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## Was the Soviet System Reformable?

Stephen F. Cohen

[It is] the question of all questions.

—Leon Onikov

Of all Russia's "accursed" twentieth-century questions, one will continue to torment the nation more than any other in the twenty-first century: Why did the Soviet Union, or "Great Russia," as fervent nationalists sometimes call it, perish? Russian scholars, politicians, and public opinion have been bitterly divided over the question ever since that state disappeared in December 1991, but most western commentators think they already know the answer: The Soviet system was not reformable and thus was doomed by its inherent, irremediable defects.

Considering the historic pro-democratic and pro-market changes that occurred under Mikhail Gorbachev during the six years from 1985 to 1991, all of them far exceeding the mere liberalization thought possible by even the most "optimistic" Sovietologists, was the system really unreformable? Certainly there was no such consensus at the time. Virtually to the end, western governments, including the United States, thought and indeed hoped that a reformed Soviet Union might result from Gorbachev's leadership. (The issue here, I should emphasize, is not, however, his role as a reform leader but the system's capacity for fundamental change.) And while scholarly "pessimists" maintained, as most Sovietologists always had, that the system could not be reformed and Gorbachev would therefore fail, many studies conducted during the perestroika years now took it for granted that "systematic change was possible in the Soviet context." An American economist soon to be the top Soviet expert at the White House was even more emphatic: "Is Soviet socialism reformable? Yes, it is reformable, and it is already being reformed."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Richard Sakwa, *Gorbachev and His Reforms, 1985–1990* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1991), 357; and Ed A. Hewett, "Is Soviet Socialism Reformable?" in Alexander Dallin and Gail W. Lapidus, eds., *The Soviet System: From Crisis to Collapse*, rev. ed. (Boulder, Colo., 1995), 320. For examples of other works that assumed the system's reformability at the time, see Robert V. Daniels, *Is Russia Reformable? Change and Resistance from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Boulder, Colo., 1988); George W. Breslauer, ed., *Can Gorbachev's Reforms Succeed?* (Berkeley, 1990); Stephen White, *Gorbachev in Power* (New York, 1990); Robert T. Huber and Donald R. Kelley, eds., *Perestroika-Era Politics: The New Soviet Legislature and Gorbachev's*

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Why, then, have so many specialists of different generations and scholarly persuasions, with very few exceptions, maintained since 1991 that the “USSR could not be reformed,” that it was “fundamentally, structurally unreformable,” indeed that Soviet reform was a “contradiction in terms, like fried snowballs,” and therefore that Gorbachev merely “failed to reform the unreformable?” Still more, why do they insist, as though to preclude any reconsideration, that this towering historical question “has been answered?”<sup>2</sup> Understanding their reasoning is not always easy because the “intrinsic irreformability of Soviet Communism” is one of the worst formulated axioms in the literature. In some cases, it is mere tautology, as with the French Sovietologist who could “not see the Soviet system reforming itself into something really different without ceasing to be the Soviet system.”<sup>3</sup> Apart from that kind of pseudoanalysis, four somewhat dif-

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*Political Reforms* (Armonk, N.Y., 1991); Eugene Huskey, ed., *Executive Power and Soviet Politics: The Rise and Decline of the Soviet State* (Armonk, N.Y., 1992); Michael E. Urban, *More Power to the Soviets: The Democratic Revolution in the USSR* (Brookfield, Vt., 1990); Jerry F. Hough, *Russia and the West: Gorbachev and the Politics of Reform*, 2d ed. (New York, 1990); and the authors cited in Jan Hallenberg, *The Demise of the Soviet Union: Analysing the Collapse of a State* (Burlington, Vt., 2002), 177–86, 195; and by David Rowley, “Interpretations of the End of the Soviet Union: Three Paradigms,” *Kritika* 2, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 414n9. For the U.S. government, see Michael R. Beschloss and Strobe Talbott, *At the Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War* (Boston, 1993), chaps. 16–21.

2. See, respectively, Anders Åslund, *How Russia Became a Market Economy* (Washington, D.C., 1995), 31; M. Steven Fish, *Democracy from Scratch: Opposition and Regime in the New Russian Revolution* (Princeton, 1995), 3; Michael Dobbs in *Washington Post*, 15 December 1991; Beryl Williams’s review of John Keep, *Last of the Empires: A History of the Soviet Union, 1945–1991*, in *Russian Review* 56, no. 1 (January 1997): 143; and David Saunders’s review of Theodore Taranovski, ed., *Reform in Modern Russian History: Progress or Cycle?* in *Europe-Asia Studies* 48, no. 5 (July 1996): 868. Similarly, see Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917–1991* (New York, 1994); Fred Coleman, *The Decline and Fall of the Soviet Empire: Forty Years that Shook the World, from Stalin to Yeltsin* (New York, 1996), xii, xv, xvi; Alec Nove, *The Soviet System in Retrospect: An Obituary Notice* (New York, 1993), 7; Richard Pipes, *Communism: A History* (London, 1994), 39; Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970–2000* (New York, 2001), 181; and Mark R. Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* (New York, 2002), 390. For notable exceptions, see Alexander Dallin, “Causes of the Collapse of the USSR,” in Dallin and Lapidus, eds., *Soviet System*, 673–95; David M. Kotz and Fred Weir, *Revolution from Above: The Demise of the Soviet System* (New York, 1997); Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, 1993); Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (New York, 1997); Jerry F. Hough, *Democratization and Revolution in the USSR, 1985–1991* (Washington, D.C., 1997); and Peter Reddaway and Dmitri Glinski, *The Tragedy of Russia’s Reforms: Market Bolshevism against Democracy* (Washington, D.C., 2001). For an early but different approach to this issue, see Alexander Dallin, “Reform in Russia: American Perceptions and U.S. Policy,” in Robert O. Crummey, ed., *Reform in Russia and the USSR: Past and Prospects* (Urbana, 1989), 243–56. And for an interesting treatment of the question from inside the political culture of communist systems, see Zdenek Mlynar, *Can Gorbachev Change the Soviet Union? The International Dimensions of Political Reform* (Boulder, Colo., 1990).

3. Martin Malia, “Leninist Endgame,” *Daedalus* 121, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 60; Alain Besançon, “Breaking the Spell,” in George R. Urban, ed., *Can the Soviet System Survive Reform? Seven Colloquies about the State of Soviet Socialism Seventy Years after the Bolshevik Revolution* (London, 1989), 202.

ferent reasons are usually given for the assertion that the system could not be reformed.

One is that an original sin of the Soviet Union—its aberrant ideology, the illegitimate way it came into being, or the crimes it then committed—made it forever an evil without redemptive, alternative possibilities of development, and thus “too fatally flawed to be reformed.” Through seven decades of Soviet history, according to this view, nothing essential ever changed or could change; the system never produced any real reformers or reforms, just, as with Gorbachev’s perestroika, the “illusion of reformability.” The Soviet evil could end only with the system’s total destruction into “economic and social rubble.” Despite pretenses of scholarly objectivity, this is essentially a theological kind of argument, and like most sacred ideological beliefs, it crams history into Manichean interpretations while stubbornly rejecting all evidence that does not fit.<sup>4</sup>

It can be challenged, however, on its own terms. World theologies offer no such certitude about the role, duration, or resolution of evil while allowing more room for alternatives and human choice than we find in this rigidly deterministic sermon on the Soviet experience. Moreover, if original sin forever disqualifies a political or economic system from redemption, how did slave-holding America become an exemplary democracy? Can it be plausibly or morally argued that an original Soviet evil was greater, more formative, or more at odds with the state’s professed values than was slavery in the United States, which John Adams called “an evil of colossal magnitude,” and which a contemporary American historian and a modern-day U.S. president rank as “one of history’s greatest crimes”; where 8 to 12 million souls were held in absolute bondage over two hundred years, while perhaps another 12 million died in transit from Africa; and where, we are told, “slaves represented more capital than any other asset in the nation, with the exception of land?” Nations and systems, it seems, can change. And in fact, the leading American crusader against the Soviet “evil empire,” President Ronald Reagan, decided that it had ceased to be malevolent after only three years of Gorbachev’s reforms.<sup>5</sup>

4. Malia, *Soviet Tragedy*, 5; Malia in Stephen R. Graubard, “The Mystery of Z,” *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 44, no. 2 (November 1990): 8; and his “To the Stalin Mausoleum,” in Dallin and Lapidus, eds., *Soviet System*, 667. Similarly, see David Satter, *The Age of Delirium: The Decline and Fall of the Soviet Union* (New York, 1996); and Terry McNeill, “Soviet Studies and the Collapse of the USSR: In Defense of Realism,” in Michael Cox, ed., *Rethinking the Soviet Collapse: Sovietology, the Death of Communism and the New Russia* (New York, 1998), 68. Even an admirer of Malia, who is the most prominent and energetic exponent of this thesis, is troubled by his reliance on “an original sin of biblical proportions.” See Yanni Kotsonis, “The Ideology of Martin Malia,” *Russian Review* 58, no. 1 (January 1999): 126. For a systematic critique of Malia’s “essentialist” explanation, see Dallin, “Causes of the Collapse.”

5. For these facts, see David Brion Davis in *New York Times*, 26 August 2001; and Brent Staples in *New York Times*, 9 January 2000. For these opinions, see, respectively, George W. Bush, who cites Adams, quoted by Richard W. Stevenson in *New York Times*, 9 July 2003; and the historian Steven Mintz, “A Slave-Narrative Documentary Is Limited, but Compelling,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 7 February 2003, B16. On the larger point, consider the title of a recent review of books on slavery: George M. Fredrickson, “America’s Original Sin,”

A second and more commonly held view is that the end of the Soviet Union was proof of its unreformability—on the assumption, evidently, that death is always caused by incurable disease. It is Sovietology's long-standing habit of reading, or rereading, history backwards in light of a known outcome: "With hindsight, of course, it is now clear that Gorbachev's historical mission was not to succeed, but to fail." According to another veteran specialist, "After the implosion of the Soviet Union, the outcome now appears to have been inevitable all along." Even worldly scholars and journalists, it seems, need to believe that epochal events are predetermined by some inexorable logic.<sup>6</sup> But such assertions are an abdication of real analysis and explanation. For outcomes to seem inevitable, historical complexities, alternatives, contingencies, and other possible results have to be minimized, rescripted, or expunged from the story.

Even apart from the anomaly that the Soviet breakup may have been the least predicted "inevitable" major event in modern times, the "fallacy of retrospective determinism," or "hindsight bias," can also be exposed on its own terms.<sup>7</sup> Many of its practitioners emphasize Gorbachev's "mistakes" while proffering their own prescriptive policies, thereby implying that Soviet reform would have succeeded had he acted differently or had it been led by someone else.<sup>8</sup> Such criticisms of Gorbachev are contradictory. Some specialists say he should have reformed faster, others slower; some say he should have been more democratic, others more authoritarian. But all these coulda-woulda-shoulda analyses tacitly concede the existence of alternatives and thus implicitly raise what-if or counterfactual

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*New York Review of Books*, 25 March 2004, 34–36. For Reagan, see Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington, D.C., 1994), 352.

6. The quotes are from Michael Dobbs, "Strobe Talbott and the 'Cursed Questions,'" *Washington Post Magazine*, 9 June 1996, 11; and Dusko Doder, "Eighty Years That Shook the World," review of Robert Service, *A History of Twentieth-Century Russia*, in *Washington Post Book World*, 22 March 1998, X10. Similarly, see Malia, *Soviet Tragedy*, 492; Michael McFaul, "Evaluating Yeltsin and His Revolution," in Andrew C. Kuchins, ed., *Russia after the Fall* (Washington, D.C., 2002), 27; Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization*, 4, 341; Jack F. Matlock, Jr., *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York, 1995), 293; and Peter Kenz, "Dealing with Discredited Beliefs," *Kritika* 4, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 369. For a critique of the long-standing habit, see Stephen F. Cohen, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics and History since 1917* (New York, 1985), 19–27. Historical opinion about the tsarist reforms of the nineteenth century and the fate of that system would seem to be an instructive analogy: "The collapse of the Tsarist autocracy in 1917 is no longer seen as proof incontestable of the ultimate or inevitable failure of these reforms." Ben Eklof, "Introduction," in Eklof, John Bushnell, and Larissa Zakharova, eds., *Russia's Great Reforms, 1855–1881* (Bloomington, 1994), x.

7. For the fallacy and bias, see Reinhard Bendix quoted in Dallin, "Causes of the Collapse," 688. Mark Almond, "1989 without Gorbachev: What If Communism Had Not Collapsed," makes the first point in Niall Ferguson, ed., *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals* (London, 1997), 392.

8. See, for example, Aurel Braun and Richard B. Day, "Gorbachevian Contradictions," *Problems of Communism* 39, no. 3 (May–June 1990): 36–50; Dmitri Simes, "Gorbachev's Time of Troubles," *Foreign Policy*, no. 82 (Spring 1991): 97–117; Anders Åslund, *Gorbachev's Struggle for Economic Reform*, exp. ed. (Ithaca, 1991); and Marshall I. Goldman, *What Went Wrong with Perestroika* (New York, 1991), esp. 210–19.

questions that undermine their own conclusions about an unreformable Soviet system and its inevitable collapse.

Consider a few counterfactual questions about alternatives and contingencies, a form of analysis well established in other fields of historical interpretation but rarely undertaken seriously in Sovietology.<sup>9</sup> Most writers agree that Gorbachev's fast-track democratization policies made his leadership vulnerable to growing economic hardships and nationalist unrest; that his failure to stand in a popular election for the Soviet presidency in 1990 later deprived him of legitimacy, especially in 1990–91 when confronted by Boris El'tsin's electoral rise to the presidency of the Russian Republic; and that the combination of El'tsin's anti-Kremlin politics and the August 1991 putsch did much to doom Gorbachev's efforts to hold the Union together.

But what if Gorbachev had managed to introduce market reforms before or without democratization, in some version of the Chinese model that many Russian reformers still think would have been the best approach, or if the 1986 Chernobyl' nuclear accident and 1988 Armenian earthquake had not devastated the federal budget? Even later, popularly elected or not, what if Gorbachev had used force early, as he could have easily done, to discourage secessionist activities in one or two republics? And what if he had sent El'tsin into remote ambassadorial exile after the future oppositionist's ouster from the leadership in 1987 or denied him access to state-controlled television in 1990 and 1991, as El'tsin later denied his communist rival during the 1996 Russian presidential campaign?

Alternately, would El'tsin ever have challenged the Union government if he had himself become president of the Soviet Union instead of its Russian Republic, as was conceivable in 1990 and as he considered doing after the failed coup in August 1991? And when he and two other Soviet leaders did stealthily abolish the Union in December 1991, what if the Soviet military or other security forces had moved against them, as El'tsin worried they might? As for the fateful putsch attempt in August, would it have taken place if Gorbachev had removed those ringleaders from their powerful high-level positions when they first conspired against him a few months earlier? Indeed, if the United States and other G-7 nations had committed large-scale financial assistance to Gorbachev's reforms in mid-1991, as he requested, would any Soviet opponent have dared to move against him?

Those are only some of the legitimate questions disregarded by yet another standard explanation of why the Soviet system purportedly could not change: "The system simply would not accept reform." Derived from

9. For some exceptions, see George W. Breslauer, *Gorbachev and Yeltsin as Leaders* (New York, 2002), 266–70; Henry E. Hale, "Ethnofederalism and Theories of Secession" (unpublished manuscript, June 2001); and especially, Hough, *Democratization*, which examines a number of the questions raised here. For other fields, see, for example, Philip E. Tetlock and Aaron Belkin, eds., *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical, Methodological, and Psychological Perspectives* (Princeton, 1996); Ferguson, ed., *Virtual History*; and Robert Crowley, ed., *What If? The World's Foremost Military Historians Imagine What Might Have Been* (New York, 1999).

the old totalitarian model, the argument that the Soviet Union was structurally unreformable comes in several versions but evidently rests on two basic assumptions. The monolithic communist ruling class, or bureaucratic nomenklatura, would never permit any changes that actually threatened its monopolistic hold on power and would therefore “oppose all types of reform.” And because “the political system had been constructed along totalitarian lines . . . its institutions could not be retooled to serve pluralist goals.”<sup>10</sup>

But they too turned out to be false assumptions. All of Gorbachev’s major political and economic reforms during the decisive period from 1985 to 1990 were introduced, discussed, and ratified in the highest communist nomenklatura assemblies—the Politburo, Central Committee, a national party conference, and two party congresses. Those bodies even voted to abolish the practice underlying their own bureaucratic domination, appointment to all important political offices, in favor of elections. And in the process of enacting these “pluralist” reforms, those institutions became deeply divided, factionalized, and thus themselves pluralist, as did the constitutional bedrock of the system, the soviets.

That remarkable development brings us to the argument most favored by writers who insist that the Soviet Union could not be reformed: the system was “mutually exclusive with democracy” and therefore could only die from it.<sup>11</sup> Even if true, however, it would not mean that the system was completely unreformable but that it was undemocratizable, which is also questionable. The argument assumes that once Gorbachev permitted relatively free speech, political activity, and elections, as he did by 1989, mass anti-Soviet sentiments—long suppressed and usually attributed to an in-

10. For the quotes, see, respectively, Carolyn McGiffert Ekedahl and Melvin A. Goodman, *The Wars of Eduard Shevardnadze* (University Park, 1997), 50; Giulietto Chiesa, *Transition to Democracy: Political Change in the Soviet Union, 1987–1991* (Hanover, 1993), 203; and Peter Rutland, “Sovietology: Who Got It Right and Who Got It Wrong?” in Cox, ed., *Rethinking the Soviet Collapse*, 43. For different versions of the institutional thesis, see Philip G. Roeder, *Red Sunset: The Failure of Soviet Politics* (Princeton, 1993); Valerie Bunce, *Subversive Institutions: The Design and the Destruction of Socialism and the State* (New York, 1999); and Richard Sakwa, “From the USSR to Postcommunist Russia,” in Stephen White, Alex Pravda, and Zvi Gitelman, eds., *Developments in Russian Politics 4* (Durham, 1997), 16, who writes: “The polity itself was incapable of reform.”

11. Rasma Karklins quoted approvingly in John Keep, *Last of the Empires: A History of the Soviet Union, 1945–1991* (New York, 1995), 416. Similarly, see Robert Conquest quoted in Brown, *Gorbachev*, 252; Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*, 71–73; and Anthony D’Agostino, *Gorbachev’s Revolution* (New York, 1998), 172. The argument is explicit or implicit in many books. See, for example, Fish, *Democracy from Scratch*; Nicolai N. Petro, *The Rebirth of Russian Democracy: An Interpretation of Political Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995); Michael Urban, *The Rebirth of Politics in Russia* (New York, 1997); Malia, *Soviet Tragedy*; Coleman, *Decline and Fall*; John B. Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire* (Princeton, 1993); and Michael McFaul, *Russia’s Unfinished Revolution: Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin* (Ithaca, 2001). There is also the different but related view that democratization was incompatible not only with the Soviet system but with Russia’s general traditions of governance. See, for example, Theodore H. von Laue, “Gorbachev’s Place in History,” in Joseph L. Wiczyński, ed., *The Gorbachev Reader* (Salt Lake City, 1993), 149–51; and Walter M. Pintner, “Reformability in the Age of Reform and Counterreform, 1855–94,” in Crummey, ed., *Reform in Russia*, 243–56.

surgent “civil society”—were bound to “delegitimize” and sweep away the system in favor of a radically non-Soviet one.

Not surprisingly, El'tsin and his allies seized upon this explanation of both the unreformability and the end of the Soviet Union in late 1991 when they were jettisoning Gorbachev's gradualist perestroika and dismantling the Union. In the writings of many western scholars and other specialists, particularly American ones, it has since become the axiom that the last years of the Soviet Union brought forth “an accelerating revolution from below,” a “genuinely popular revolution,” a “popular democratic revolution.” In this telling, ordinary citizens rejected socialism, “like a mass internal defection,” and “mounted the greatest bloodless revolution in history to remove that Soviet regime.”<sup>12</sup>

In reality, no anti-Soviet revolution from below ever took place, certainly not in Russia, which is the focus of most of these assertions. In 1989–91, popular support for democratization and marketization was increasing, as were protests against Communist Party rule, corrupt elites, bureaucratic abuses, and economic shortages. But the evidence, particularly public opinion surveys, clearly showed that very large majorities of Soviet citizens, ranging up to 80 percent and even more on some issues, continued to oppose free-market capitalism and to support fundamental economic-social features of the Soviet system—among them, public ownership of large-scale economic assets, a state-regulated market, guaranteed employment, controlled consumer prices and other standard-of-living subsidies, and free education and health care. Or as a nonpartisan Russian historian of the period has concluded, the “overwhelming majority of the population shared the idea of the ‘socialist choice.’”<sup>13</sup>

12. See, respectively, Rasma Karklins quoted in Kotz and Weir, *Revolution*, 239n9; Michael Wines in *New York Times*, 9 January 2000; Fish, *Democracy from Scratch*, 3, 51; Stephen Kotkin, “The State—Is It Us? Memoirs, Archives, and Kremlinologists,” *Russian Review* 61, no. 1 (January 2002): 50; and George Kennan quoted by Thomas L. Friedman in *New York Times*, 2 May 1998. Similarly, see Joel C. Moses, “Soviet Provincial Politics in an Era of Transition and Revolution, 1989–91,” *Soviet Studies* 44, no. 3 (1992): 479; Thomas F. Remington, “Reform or Revolution?” in Robert V. Daniels, ed., *Soviet Communism from Reform to Collapse* (Lexington, Mass., 1995), 330–39; Leslie Holmes, *Post-Communism: An Introduction* (Durham, 1997), 57, 130–31; D’Agostino, *Gorbachev’s Revolution*, 5; the authors discussed in Rowley, “Interpretations,” 403–6; and the single-authored books cited in the preceding note. Looking back at that period, Russian President Vladimir Putin gave a very different interpretation of events: “Let’s proceed from reality. Democracy in Russia was in fact issued from above.” *Izvestiia*, 14 July 2000. For an alleged popular defection from Soviet socialism, see also Åslund, *How Russia*, 51–52; and Michael McFaul in *Washington Post*, 22 September 2001. Very few Russian historians think that democratization killed the system. For one who does, see Vladimir Sogrin, *Politicheskaiia istoriia sovremennoi Rossii, 1985–1994: Ot Gorbacheva do El'tsina* (Moscow, 1994), 107. For western scholars who dissent from the notion of a revolution from below, see Kotz and Weir, *Revolution*; Hough, *Democratization*; Reddaway and Glinski, *Tragedy of Russia’s Reforms*, chaps. 3–4; Judith Devlin, *The Rise of the Russian Democrats: The Causes and Consequences of the Elite Revolution* (Brookfield, Vt., 1995); and Gordon M. Hahn, *Russia’s Revolution from Above, 1985–2000: Reform, Transition, and Revolution in the Fall of the Soviet Communist Regime* (New Brunswick, 2002).

13. Aleksandr S. Barsenkov, *Vvedenie v sovremennuiu rossiskuiu istoriiu: 1985–1991* (Moscow, 2002), 326. A British specialist reached the same conclusion: “Russians, it seemed, wanted a ‘socialism that worked.’” Stephen White, *Communism and Its Collapse* (New York,



Evidence of public support for the multinational Soviet state itself is even clearer and more precise. In an unprecedented referendum held in Russia and eight other republics in March 1991, which included 93 percent of the entire Soviet population, 76.4 percent of the very large turnout voted to preserve the Union—only nine months before it was abolished. Two developments confirm the validity of that democratic voting result for opinion in Russia. Even El'tsin rose to electoral power in the Russian Republic on the widespread aspiration for a reformed Soviet system, not its overthrow. And after 1991, public regret over the Union's abolition remained very high, growing to nearly 80 percent in the early twenty-first century.<sup>14</sup>

Nor is it true that a mass anti-Soviet "August Revolution" thwarted the attempted coup by hardline officials seeking to restore order throughout the country a few months after the referendum. Contrary to this equally widespread and specious myth, there was no "national resistance" to the putsch. Barely 1 percent of Soviet citizens actively opposed the three-day tank occupation even in pro-El'tsin Moscow and considerably fewer resisted in provincial cities, the countryside, and outside the Russian Republic. The other 99 percent, according to an authoritative Russian observer, "were feverishly buying up macaroni and pretending that nothing was going on" or, as the British ambassador reported, waiting "to see which way the cat would jump." Whatever the exact percentages, even opponents of the coup knew "how few people" had come out to oppose it.<sup>15</sup> (There was,

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2001), 75. In an opinion poll taken in late 1990, two-thirds of those surveyed still favored socialism. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1991, no. 2:51. For opinion on economic-social features of the system, see Matthew Wyman, *Public Opinion in Postcommunist Russia* (New York, 1997), chap. 7; the survey data collected in Iurii A. Levada, ed., *Est' mnenie!: Itogi sotsiologicheskogo oprosa* (Moscow, 1990) and his *Sovetskii prostoi chelovek: Opyt sotsial'nogo portreta na rubezhe 90-kh godov* (Moscow, 1993); and even the data presented by a colleague of the anti-Soviet "shock-therapy" team that subsequently came to power, Tatiana Koval, "On the Threshold of Reforms," in Yegor Gaidar, ed., *The Economics of Transition* (Cambridge, Mass., 2003), 755–87. A number of western scholars have also used detailed polling data to make similar and related points. See, for example, Kotz and Weir, *Revolution*, 137–39; Hough, *Democratization*, 471; James R. Millar, "Introduction: Social Legacies and the Aftermath of Communism," in James R. Millar and Sharon L. Wolchik, eds., *The Social Legacy of Communism* (Washington, D.C., 1994), 5–7; Vladimir Shlapentokh, *A Normal Totalitarian Society: How the Soviet Union Functioned and How It Collapsed* (Armonk, N.Y., 2001), 125, 208, 281; Stephen White, *Gorbachev and After* (New York, 1992), 137–38, 241–51, 258–59; and Redaway and Glinski, *Tragedy of Russia's Reforms*, 92–94, 154.

14. Wyman, *Public Opinion*, chap. 6; *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Newslines*, 16 March 2001. For El'tsin, see his presidential campaign speech in *Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Report: Soviet Union* (hereafter *FBIS*), 3 June 1991, 71–79; Mikhail Chelnokov, *Rossia bez soiuza, Rossia bez Rossii: Zapiski deputata rassreliannogo parlamenta* (Moscow, 1994), 30–32; and Hough, *Democratization*, 279, 308, 333–34. For the referendum, see White, *Gorbachev and After*, 180–81.

15. Alexander Lebed, *My Life and My Country* (Washington, D.C., 1997), 321; Rodric Braithwaite, *Across the Moscow River: The World Turned Upside Down* (New Haven, 2002), 242; Elem Klimov in *Obshchaia gazeta*, 23–39 August 2001. Similarly, see Oleg Poptsov, *Khronika vremen "Tsaria Borisa": Rossia, Kreml', 1991–1995* (Moscow, 1995), 261; Jonathan Steele, *Eternal Russia: Yeltsin, Gorbachev, and the Mirage of Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1994), 59–79; and Mark Kramer, "The Collapse of the Soviet Union," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 5, no. 4 (Fall 2003): 9. For a few of the many claims of an "August Revolution," see Peter Kenez, "Debating Democracy in Russia," *New Leader*, 9–23 September 1991, 15–18; Mar-

for example, no response to El'tsin's call for a general strike against the putsch.)

We are left, then, without any theoretical or conceptual reason to think that the Soviet system was unreformable and thus, as is so often said, "doomed" from the onset of Gorbachev's reforms. Indeed, if the question is formulated properly, without the customary ideological slant, and examined empirically in light of the changes actually introduced, particularly in the years from 1985 to 1990 before crises destabilized the country, we might reasonably conclude that it turned out to be remarkably reformable. But in order to ask the question correctly, we need exact rather than cavalier understandings both of reform and of the Soviet system.

The universal meaning of reform is not merely change but change that betters people's lives, usually by expanding their political or economic freedom, or both. Nor is it revolution or total transformation of an existing order but normally piecemeal, gradualist improvements within a system's broad historical, institutional, cultural dimensions. Insisting that "real reform" must be rapid and complete, as does so much Sovietological writing, would disqualify, for example, historic but incremental expansions of voting, civil, and welfare rights over decades in Great Britain and the United States, as well as the New Deal of the American 1930s. It should also be remembered that reform has not always or necessarily meant democratization and marketization, though it has increasingly been the case in modern times.

In those plain terms, it is not true historically that the Soviet system was unreformable—that it had experienced only "failed attempts at reform."<sup>16</sup> The New Economic Policy (NEP) greatly expanded the economic and, to a lesser degree, the political freedom of most citizens in the 1920s, and Nikita Khrushchev's policies benefited them in several important and lasting ways in the 1950s and 1960s. Most western specialists evidently believe those were the limits of possible Soviet reform, arguing that even Gorbachev's professed democratic socialism was incompatible with the system's more legitimizing, antidemocratic historical icons—the October revolution and Vladimir Lenin.

But this assumption too lacks comparative perspective. French and American generations later reimagined their national revolutions to accommodate latter-day values.<sup>17</sup> Why could not Lenin and other Soviet founders, who had professed democracy while suppressing it, eventually be viewed and forgiven by a democratic nation as products of their times, which were shaped by the then unprecedented violence of World War I,

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tin Malia, "The August Revolution," *New York Review of Books*, 26 September 1991, 22–28; Anatole Shub, "The Fourth Russian Revolution: Historical Perspectives," *Problems of Communism* 40, no. 6 (November–December 1991): 20; Leon Aron, *Yeltsin: A Revolutionary Life* (New York, 2000), chap. 10; McFaul, "Evaluating Yeltsin," 27; and Urban, *Rebirth of Politics in Russia*, 252, who sees a "national resistance." Proponents of the "August Revolution" interpretation see El'tsin as its leader or personification, but he himself later took pride in having been "able to save Russia from revolution." Quoted in Reddaway and Glinski, *Tragedy of Russia's Reforms*, 226.

16. Roeder, *Red Sunset*, 5.

17. See, for example, Michael Kammen, *A Season of Youth: The American Revolution and Historical Imagination* (New York, 1978).

much as American founding fathers were forgiven their slaves? (The United States had slave-owning presidents for nearly fifty years and pro-slavery ones for even longer, and slave labor was used even to build the nation's Capitol and White House.)<sup>18</sup> In fact, such reconsiderations of October and Lenin were already well under way by the late 1980s as part of the larger process of "repentance."<sup>19</sup>

Arbitrary definitions of "the Soviet system" must also be set aside. Equating it with "communism" is the most widespread, as in the ubiquitous axiom "communism was unreformable." In this usage, communism is a nonobservable and meaningless analytical notion.<sup>20</sup> No Soviet leaders ever said it existed in their country or anywhere else, only socialism, and the last Soviet leader doubted even that.<sup>21</sup> Communist was merely the name given to the official ideology, ruling party, and professed goal; and its meaning depended on the current leadership and varied so greatly over the years that it could mean almost anything. Thus, by 1990, Gorbachev decided it meant "to be consistently democratic and put universal values above everything else." Western observers may not understand the difference between the abstraction "communism" and the fullness of the actual Soviet system, or Sovietism, but the Soviet (and later Russian) people made it clear that they agreed with Gorbachev: "Communism is not the Soviet Union."<sup>22</sup>

Instead, the Soviet system, like any other, has to be defined and evaluated, not as an abstraction or ideological artifact but in terms of its functioning components, particularly its basic institutions and practices. Six have always been emphasized in western Sovietological literature: the of-

18. Davis in *New York Times*, 26 August 2001; Mintz, "A Slave-Narrative Documentary," B16.

19. The critical discussion of early Soviet history, unleashed by Gorbachev's glasnost policies, was initially inspired in part by Tengiz Abuladze's film *Pokaianie*. For an overview, see R. W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Yeltsin Era* (London, 1997), pt. 1.

20. For a similar point, see John Miller, *Mikhail Gorbachev and the End of Soviet Power* (New York, 1993), 201. The equation is so widespread that it is used by scholars on opposite sides of the political spectrum. See Malia, *Soviet Tragedy*; and Chiesa, *Transition to Democracy*, 202.

21. Gorbachev was reported to have said as much privately on several occasions even while in power. See, for example, Georgii Smirnov quoted by Aleksandr Tsipko in *Nezavisimaia gazeta—Ssenarii*, 17 October 1996; Valentin Falin quoted in *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, 26 July 1997; and Andrei Sakharov in *FBIS*, 15 April 1988, 60. After leaving office, Gorbachev was entirely candid: "There was no socialism in our country." *FBIS*, 24 February 1992, 21. Similarly, see Mikhail S. Gorbachev, *Gody trudnykh reshenii: Izbrannoe, 1985–1992 gg.* (Moscow, 1993), 8.

22. BBC interview with Gorbachev, 8 March 2002, *Johnson's Russia List* (email list), 20 March 2002. Even a pro-El'tsin history concedes that "the majority of critics of the regime came out not against the soviets but against the domination of the Communist Party." Iurii M. Baturin et al., eds., *Epokha El'tsina: Ocherki politicheskoi istorii* (Moscow, 2001), 170. Russians expressed their agreement in two ways. First, as we have seen, by protesting against Communist Party rule while supporting the Soviet system in the late 1980s and early 1990s. And later by regretting the end of the Soviet Union and expressing nostalgia for the Soviet era but without voting the Communist Party back into power. For a similar point about Gorbachev's 1990 meaning of communism, see Andrzej Walicki, *Marxism and the Leap to the Kingdom of Freedom: The Rise and Fall of the Communist Utopia* (Stanford, 1995), 554–55, 617n177.

ficial and obligatory ideology; the especially authoritarian nature of the ruling Communist Party; the party's dictatorship over everything related to politics, buttressed by the political police; the nationwide pyramid of pseudodemocratic soviets; the state's monopolistic control of the economy and all substantive property; and the multinational federation, or Union, of republics that was really a unitary state dominated by Moscow.

To ask if the Soviet system was reformable means asking if any or all of those basic components could be reformed. Contrary to the view that the system was an indivisible "monolith," or that the Communist Party was its only essential element, it makes no sense to assume that if any components were transformed, supplemented by new ones, or eliminated, the result would no longer be the Soviet system.<sup>23</sup> Such reasoning is not applied to reform in other systems, and there are no grounds for it in Soviet history. The system's original foundations, the soviets of 1917, were popularly elected, multiparty institutions, only later becoming something else. There was no monopolistic control of the economy or absence of a market until the 1930s. And when the Stalinist mass terror, which had been a fundamental feature for twenty-five years, ended in the 1950s, no one doubted that the system was still Soviet.

By 1990, Soviet conceptions of legitimate reforms within the system varied considerably, but many Gorbachev and El'tsin supporters had come to believe they should and could include multiparty democracy, a marketized economy with both state and private property, and an authentic federation of republics.<sup>24</sup> Those contemporary beliefs and the country's political history suggest that for a reformed system still to be Soviet, or to be regarded as such, four general elements had to be preserved in some form: a national (though not necessarily well-defined or unanimous) socialist idea that continued to memorialize antecedents in 1917 and the original Leninist movement, which had called itself social democratic until 1918; the network of soviets as the institutional continuity with 1917 and the constitutional source of political sovereignty; a state and private "mixed" market economy with enough social entitlements to be called socialist, however much it might resemble a western-style welfare state; and a union of Russia with at least several of the Soviet republics, whose number had grown over the years from four to fifteen.<sup>25</sup>

With those well-defined and unbiased understandings of the question, we can now ask which, if any, basic components of the old Soviet sys-

23. See, for example, Urban, "Introduction," in Urban, ed., *Can the Soviet System Survive Reform?* xiii; Remington, "Reform or Revolution," 331; and, similarly, Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization*, 401. As for the party, one scholar writes: "the CPSU leadership (i.e., the Soviet system)." Troy McGrath, "Russia Reassessed: The Devil of Democratization Is in the Details," *Harriman Review* (Columbia University) 13, no. 4 (December 2002): 15.

24. The new conception of the Soviet system was expressed in many pro-perestroika publications in 1988–91, but for a striking example see Elena Bonner—Andrei Sakharov's widow and hardly a Soviet devotee—on power and property, in *Moskovskie novosti*, 15 July 1990.

25. That is, there is no reason to assume, as a recent monograph seems to do, that a new Union would have had to include "all fifteen union republics." Edward W. Walker, *Dissolution: Sovereignty and the Breakup of the Soviet Union* (Lanham, Md., 2003), 186.

tem were actually reformed under Gorbachev. There can hardly be any doubt about the official ideology. By 1990, decades of Stalinist and then Leninist punitive dogmas had been largely replaced by western-style social democratic and other “universal” tenets that differed little from liberal-democratic ones. What had been heresy for generations now became official Soviet ideology, ratified by the newly elected Congress of People’s Deputies and even by an at least semiconverted Communist Party congress.<sup>26</sup> Still more, the government’s ideology was no longer obligatory, even in once thoroughly proscribed realms such as education and official communist publications. “Pluralism” of thought, including religious belief, was the new official watchword and growing reality.<sup>27</sup>

Nor was this a superficial or inconsequential reform. Western specialists had always stressed the role of ideology in the Soviet system, with many even arguing that it was the most important factor. That was an exaggeration, but ideology did matter. Just as Gorbachev’s radical “New Thinking” about international affairs paved the way for his reformation in Soviet foreign policy in the late 1980s, disestablishing old ideological strictures about Soviet socialism was imperative for carrying out far-reaching reforms at home.<sup>28</sup>

The next and larger reform was dismantling the Communist Party monopoly on politics, particularly on public discourse, on the selection of officeholders, and on policy making. The magnitude of these democratizing changes was already so great by 1990, as a result of Gorbachev’s policies virtually ending censorship, permitting freedom of political organization, promoting increasingly free elections, and creating an authentic parliament, that some western scholars called it a “revolution” within the system.<sup>29</sup> Party dictatorship and the primacy of communist officials at every

26. Just how heretical the new tenets were may be judged by the growing opposition of Gorbachev’s own former aide for ideology, himself a reformer. See G. L. Smirnov, *Uroki minuvshago* (Moscow, 1997). The new ideology was elaborated by Gorbachev in late 1989, reframed as the draft of a new party program in early 1990, and debated and in effect adopted at the Twenty-eighth Party Congress in July. See, respectively, *Pravda*, 26 November 1989; *Materialy plenuma tsentral’nogo komiteta KPSS: 5–7 fevralia 1990 goda* (Moscow, 1990), 511–40; and *XXVIII s’ezd kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuza: Stenograficheskii otchet*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1991), esp. 1:55–101, and 2:255–68, 276–94. Gorbachev’s aides continued to make the draft program increasingly liberal-democratic. See the draft and debates in *Pravda*, 8 August 1991; and *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, 27–30 July 1991.

27. Thus a Gorbachev aide responsible for spelling out the new ideology argued at the same time that its role in Soviet life should be greatly diminished. See Georgii Shakhnazarov, “Obnovlenie ideologii i ideologiya obnoveniia,” *Kommunist*, no. 4 (March 1990): 46–59, and in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 18 April 1990.

28. Gorbachev and his supporters fully understood this. See V. A. Medvedev, *Prozrenie, mif ili predatel'stvo: K voprosu ob ideologii perestroiki* (Moscow, 1997), 4–5; and earlier in *Pravda*, 29 June 1990.

29. See, for example, Sakwa, *Gorbachev and His Reforms*, 192; John Gooding, “Perestroika as Revolution from Within: An Interpretation,” *Russian Review* 51, no. 1 (January 1992): 36–57; and Chiesa, *Transition to Democracy*, 3. There is also the opposite view, reflexive rather than considered, that the “CPSU remained the ruling party” until August 1991. Mark R. Beissinger, “Transformation and Degeneration: The CPSU under Reform,” in James Millar, ed., *Cracks in the Monolith: Party Power in the Brezhnev Era* (Armonk, N.Y., 1992), 213.

level, established during the Leninist era seventy years before, had always been (with the arguable exception of the Stalin terror years) the bedrock of Soviet politics. In the “command-administrative system” that Gorbachev had inherited, the nationwide party apparatus was commander-in-chief and overriding administrator. In only five years, a fundamental change had therefore taken place: The Soviet political system had ceased to be Leninist or, as some writers would say, communist.<sup>30</sup>

That generalization requires qualification. In a country so vast and culturally diverse, political reforms legislated in Moscow were bound to have disparate results, from fast-paced democratization in Russia’s capital cities and the western Baltic republics to less substantial changes in the Central Asian party dictatorships. In addition, the Communist Party’s exit from power, even where democratization had progressed, was still far from complete. With millions of members, units in almost every institution and workplace, long-standing controls over military and other security forces, large financial resources, and the deference exacted from citizens for decades—the party remained the most formidable political organization in the country. And though political prisoners had been released, human rights were rapidly being established, and security forces were exposed to growing public scrutiny, the KGB remained intact and under uncertain control.

Nonetheless, the redistribution of the Communist Party’s long-held powers—to the parliament, to the new presidency created in early 1990, and to the now popularly elected soviets in the regions and republics—was already quite advanced. Gorbachev did not exaggerate when he told a national party gathering in 1990, “The Communist Party’s monopoly on power and government has come to an end.” The de-monopolization process abruptly terminated another longtime feature of the Soviet system—pseudodemocratic politics. A broad and clamorous political spectrum, exercising almost complete freedom of speech, emerged from subterranean banishment. Organized opposition, scores of would-be parties, mass demonstrations, strikes, and uncensored publications, repressed for nearly seventy years, were rapidly developing across the country and being legalized by the reformist legislature. Gorbachev was also close to the truth when he remarked with pride that the Soviet Union had suddenly become the “most politicized society in the world.”<sup>31</sup>

Russia had been intensely politicized before, fatefully so in 1917, but never under the auspices of an established regime or in the cause of constitutional government. Indeed, constitutionalism and legal procedures were the most characteristic features of Gorbachev’s political reformation. The country had a long history of laws and even constitutions, before and after 1917, but almost never any real constitutional order or lawful constraints on power, which had traditionally been concentrated in a supreme

30. Brown, *Gorbachev*, 310.

31. Gorbachev in *XXVIII s'ezd*, 2:201–2; and *Pravda*, 13 April 1990. On the latter claim, see also Liliia Shevtsova in *Izvestiia*, 27 February 1990, who wrote: “We have much more political diversity than any other country in the world.”

leadership and exercised through bureaucratic edicts. (An estimated one million ministerial decrees were still in force in 1988.)<sup>32</sup>

Therein lay the unprecedented nature of Gorbachev's political reforms. The entire Soviet transition from a dictatorship to a fledgling republic based on a separation of the Communist Party's former powers and a "socialist system of checks and balances" was carried out through existing and amended constitutional procedures. The legal culture and political habits necessary for rule-of-law government could not be engendered so quickly, but it was a remarkable beginning. By September 1990, for example, the nascent constitutional court had struck down one of Gorbachev's first presidential decrees, and he complied with the ruling.<sup>33</sup>

Considering those achievements, why is it so often said that Gorbachev's political reforms failed? The answer usually given is that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) turned out to be unreformable. The inadequacy of this generalization is twofold. It equates the entire Soviet system with the CPSU in ways that assume the former could not exist without the latter. And it treats the party as a single, undifferentiated organization.

As a result of its long and complex history, the CPSU had grown by the 1980s into a vast realm inhabited by four related but significantly different entities: the notorious but relatively small apparat that dictatorially controlled the rest of the party and, though to a decreasing extent, the bureaucratic state itself;<sup>34</sup> the apparat-appointed but much larger and more diverse nomenklatura class that held all important positions in the Soviet system; about 19 million rank-and-file members, many of whom had joined for reasons of conformity and career; and, lurking in the shadows, at least two crypto-political parties—reformist and conservative—that had been developing in the "monolithic" one-party system since the 1950s.<sup>35</sup> Not surprisingly, these components of the CPSU reacted to Gorbachev's reforms in different ways.

Whether or not the party apparatus—traditionally some 1,800 functionaries at its Moscow headquarters and several hundred thousand at other echelons of the system—was reformable hardly mattered because by 1990 it had been largely disfranchised by Gorbachev's policies. (In this connection, the growing opposition of Egor Ligachev, the party apparat's chief representative and Gorbachev's onetime ally, was particularly in-

32. V. N. Kudriavtsev in *Trud*, 11 November 1988. For the constitutional aspects of Gorbachev's reforms, see Robert B. Ahdieh, *Russia's Constitutional Revolution: Legal Consciousness and the Transition to Democracy, 1985–1996* (University Park, 1997).

33. Elizabeth Teague, "Constitutional Watchdog Suspends Presidential Decree," *Radio Liberty Report on the USSR* 2, no. 42 (19 October 1990): 9–10. For "checks and balances," see M. S. Gorbachev, *Izbrannye rechi i stat'i*, 7 vols. (Moscow, 1987–90), 7:161.

34. For the growing power of state ministries vis-à-vis the party apparatus, see Stephen Whitefield, *Industrial Power and the Soviet State* (New York, 1993); and Alexander Yakovlev, *The Fate of Marxism in Russia* (New Haven, 1993), 109–11. On scholarly neglect of the Soviet state and its government, see Eugene Huskey, "Introduction," in Huskey, ed., *Executive Power*, xii–xiii.

35. For reformers and conservatives, see Cohen, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience*, chap. 5.

dicative.)<sup>36</sup> The Moscow nerve center of apparat operations, the Secretariat, had been all but dismantled, its party committees in state economic ministries withdrawn or marginalized, and the authority of their counterparts at lower government levels assumed by elected soviets. The process lagged in the provinces, but the dethronement of the CPSU apparatus was formalized when powers exercised for decades by its Central Committee and Politburo were ceremoniously transferred to the new Soviet parliament and presidency. The apparat's control even over its own party had been substantially diminished, and in 1990 its head, the general secretary, previously selected in secret by the communist oligarchy, was elected for the first time by a national party congress.

Gorbachev may have continued to fear "this mangy, rabid dog," but the CPSU apparatus turned out to be something of a bureaucratic paper tiger. Confronted by his electoral reforms, it fell into a "state of psychological shock" and "complete confusion."<sup>37</sup> As its role in the system shrank and its organizations disintegrated, apparat representatives stepped up their anti-Gorbachev activities, but to little effect. Muscular antireform forces were now effectively based elsewhere—in the state economic ministries, military, KGB, and even the parliament. How little the Communist Party apparatus any longer mattered was dramatized in August 1991. A majority of its central and regional officials evidently supported the coup against Gorbachev, but, contrary to many western accounts, the party apparatus did not organize or probably even know about it beforehand.<sup>38</sup> (Nor did the apparatus have the power or will to resist the dissolution and banning of the party after the coup failed, when it was easily dispersed.)

Unlike the communist apparat that created it, large segments of the nomenklatura class survived the Soviet Union. That alone invalidates any simple generalization about its adaptability. Broadly understood, the millions of nomenklatura appointees throughout the system included many of the nation's administrative, economic, cultural, and other professional elites, and thus significant parts of its middle class. As is the case elsewhere, this large stratum of Soviet society, though nominally composed solely of Communist Party members and indiscriminately vilified, was divided internally by privilege, occupation, education, generation, geographic location, and political attitudes.<sup>39</sup>

36. See Yegor Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin* (New York, 1993). The figures are from Leon Onikov, *KPSS: Anatomii raspada* (Moscow, 1996), 75.

37. "Kadrovoe popolnenie perestroiki," *Pravda*, 25 June 1989; and the editorial, *Pravda*, 14 June 1989. For Gorbachev's remark, see A. S. Cherniaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym: Po dnevnikovym zapisiam* (Moscow, 1993), 356.

38. Graeme Gill, *The Collapse of a Single-Party System: The Disintegration of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York, 1995), 174–75; Mikhail Gorbachev, *Zhizn' i reformy*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1995), 2:575; and Boris Kagarlitsky, *Square Wheels: How Russian Democracy Got Derailed* (New York, 1994), 142. For examples of such western accounts, see Beissinger, "Transformation and Degeneration," 213; and Michael Dobbs, *Down With Big Brother: The Fall of the Soviet Empire* (New York, 1997), whose treatment of August 1991 is entitled "The Revolt of the Party." For attempts to substantiate that view, see G. A. Belousova and V. A. Lebedev, *Partokratiia i putch* (Moscow, 1992); and Hahn, *Russia's Revolution*, 420–27.

39. Interpretation aside, the best summary discussion of the bureaucratic or nomenklatura class is Hough, *Democratization*, 51–57.



It therefore makes no sense to characterize the party-state nomenklatura as unreformable. Even its high-level officials reacted to Gorbachev's reforms in conflicting ways and went in different directions.<sup>40</sup> By 1990, they could be found almost everywhere along the emerging political spectrum, from left to right. Many were in the forefront of opposition to perestroika. But virtually all the leading Soviet and post-Soviet reformers of the 1980s and 1990s also came from the nomenklatura class, foremost among them Gorbachev, El'tsin, and their ranking supporters. And after 1991, large segments of the old Soviet nomenklatura reemerged as mainstays of postcommunist Russia's political, administrative, and property-owning elites, some of them in the ranks of what would now be called "radical reformers."<sup>41</sup> Indeed, one of its younger members, Vladimir Putin, would become Russia's first president in the twenty-first century.

Still less is it correct to characterize the Communist Party's 19 million rank-and-file members as unreformable. Most of them differed little in actual power, privilege, or political attitudes from other ordinary Soviet citizens, and they behaved in similarly diverse ways during the Gorbachev years. By early 1991, approximately 2 million had left the party, mostly because membership was no longer worth the time or dues required. Among those who stayed, there was a "silent majority," but many supported Gorbachev's policies, as they had done from the beginning, and waged a grass-roots struggle against the apparat.<sup>42</sup> Many others became a social base for anti-perestroika movements forming inside and outside the party.

The real question about the Communist Party's reformability, given Gorbachev's democratization policies, was whether or not a competitive electoral parliamentary party could emerge from it as part of a reformed Soviet system. What we loosely call "the party" had actually been different things during its 80-year history—an underground movement in tsarist Russia, a successful vote-getting organization in revolutionary 1917, a dictatorship but with factions openly struggling over policy and power during NEP in the 1920s, a decimated and terrorized officialdom in the Stalinist 1930s, a militarized instrument of war against the German invader in the 1940s, a resurgent institution of oligarchical rule in the post-Stalin 1950s and 1960s, and, by the 1980s, an integral part of the bureaucratic statist system.<sup>43</sup>

40. It was true even of bureaucrats within the party apparatus. See Onikov, *KPSS*, 56; B. Iu. Berzin and L. N. Kogan, "Professional'naia kul'tura partiinogo rabotnika," *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia*, no. 3 (March 1989): 21–22; and "Apparat protiv apparata?" *Sovetskaiia kul'tura*, 31 March 1990.

41. For two studies of the phenomenon, see Ol'ga Kryshchanovskaia, "Transformatsiia staroi nomenklatury v novuiu rossiiskuiu elitu," *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost'*, no. 1 (1995): 51–65; and Viola Egikova in *Moskovskaia pravda*, 26 May 1994.

42. M. S. Gorbachev, *Razmyshleniia ob oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii* (Moscow, 1997), 35; Dawn Mann, "Authority of Regional Party Leaders Crumbling," *Radio Liberty Report on the USSR* 2, no. 8 (23 February 1990): 1–6; and, for rank-and-file support from the beginning, Viktor Gushchin in *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 9 September 2000. For the "silent majority," see Liudmila Savel'eva in *Izvestiia*, 3 September 1988.

43. For the party as "part of the state machine," see Lev Burtsev in *Izvestiia*, 15 July 1990; and, similarly, A. Zevelev in *Izvestiia*, 3 November 1988.

After all of those transformations, Gorbachev now wanted the party, or a significant segment of it, to undergo yet another metamorphosis by becoming a “normal political organization” capable of winning elections “strictly within the framework of a democratic process.”<sup>44</sup> Pursuing that goal involved ramifications he may not have fully foreseen but eventually came to accept. It meant politicizing, or repoliticizing, the Soviet Communist Party, as Gorbachev began to do when he called for its own democratization in 1987, which meant permitting its embryonic parties to emerge, develop, and possibly go their separate ways. It meant ending the fiction of “monolithic unity” and risking an “era of schism.”<sup>45</sup> Though cut short by the events of late 1991, the process unfolded inexorably and quickly.

By early 1988, the schism in the party was already so far along that it erupted in unprecedented polemics between the Central Committee’s two most authoritative newspapers. Defending fundamentalist, including neo-Stalinist, “principles,” *Sovetskaia Rossiia* published a long, defiant protest against Gorbachev’s perestroika; *Pravda* replied with an equally adamant defense of anti-Stalinist and democratic reform.<sup>46</sup> At the national party conference two months later, delegates spoke publicly in strongly opposing voices for the first time since the 1920s. Central Committee meetings were now a “battlefield between reformers and conservatives.” Across the country in March 1989, communists opposed communists for seats in the Congress of People’s Deputies. Though 87 percent of the winners were members of the same party, their political views were so dissimilar that Gorbachev announced they were no longer bound by a party line.<sup>47</sup>

By 1990, the growing schism had taken territorial and organizational forms, as parties began tumbling out of the CPSU like Russian nestling dolls. The three Baltic Communist parties left the Union party to try to compete in their native and increasingly nationalistic republics. At the center, apparat and other nomenklatura conservatives compelled Gorbachev to allow the formation of a Communist Party of the Russian Republic nominally within the CPSU but under their control. Formally embracing more than 60 percent of all Soviet communists, it too almost immediately split when reformers formed a rival organization, the Democratic Party of Communists of Russia.<sup>48</sup>

44. Gorbachev, *Razmyshleniia ob oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii*, 35; in *Materialy plenuma* (5–7 February 1990); 11–12; and, similarly, in *XXVIII s'ezd*, 2: 201–2.

45. Tat'iana Samolis in *Pravda*, 1 July 1991.

46. The episode was known as the Nina Andreeva affair. See *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, 3 March 1988; and *Pravda*, 5 April 1988.

47. Brown, *Gorbachev*, 191. For the Central Committee, see Onikov, *KPSS*, 90–91. At the conference, Ligachev denied the obvious (“There are no factions, no reformers and conservatives, among us”), while Gorbachev emphasized the point about the factional 1920s. *XIX vsesoiuznaia konferentsiia kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuza: Stenograficheskii otchet*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1988), 2: 88, 175.

48. *Uchreditel'nyi s'ezd kommunisticheskoi partii RSFSR: Stenograficheskii otchet*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1991); Gorbachev, *Zhizn' i reformy*, 1: 530–39; and the report by Elizabeth Tucker in *Wall Street Journal*, 11 July 1991.

All sides now understood that the “CPSU is ‘pregnant’ with multiparty-ness” and that its political spectrum ranged “from anarchists to monarchists.”<sup>49</sup> No one knew how many parties might spring from its womb—Gorbachev thought in 1991 there were “two, three, or four” just among the 412 Central Committee members<sup>50</sup>—but only the two largest mattered: the proreform or radical perestroika wing of the CPSU led by Gorbachev and now all but social democratic; and the amalgam of conservative and neo-Stalinist forces that opposed fundamental changes in the name of traditional communist beliefs and practices.

A formal “dividing up” and “parting of the ways” was already being widely discussed in 1990, but neither side was ready.<sup>51</sup> Conservatives still lacked a compelling national leader and feared the ascending El'tsin, who quit the CPSU in mid-1990, almost (though not quite) as much as they hated Gorbachev. Several Gorbachev advisers urged him to lead his followers out of the CPSU or drive out his opponents and thereby create an avowedly social democratic movement, but he still feared losing the national apparatus, with its ties to the security forces, to his enemies and, like any politician, was reluctant to split his own party. Only in the summer of 1991 were both sides ready for a formal “divorce.” It was to take place at a special national congress in November or December but became another casualty of the attempted coup in August.<sup>52</sup>

Splitting the enormous Communist Party into its polarized wings, as Gorbachev's close associate Aleksandr Iakovlev had proposed privately in 1985 and still supported, would have been the surest and quickest way to create a real multiparty system in the Soviet Union and, indeed, one more substantial than existed in post-Soviet Russia in the early twenty-first century.<sup>53</sup> In a “civilized divorce” that involved voting on opposing principles, framed by Gorbachev's social-democratic program, both sides would have walked away with a substantial proportion of the CPSU's membership, local organizations, printing presses, and other assets. Both would have im-

49. Aleksandr Iakovlev in *Izvestiia*, 2 July 1991; and I. Maliarov in *Pravda*, 26 September 1990. Or as a Soviet political scientist put it, “The CPSU is itself already a multiparty system in miniature.” Liliia Shevtsova in *Izvestiia*, 27 February 1990.

50. Quoted by Stepan Kiselev in *Moskovskie novosti*, 12 May 1991.

51. The words regularly used included *razmezhevanie* (dividing up), *rasstavanie* (parting of the ways), and even *razvod* (divorce).

52. For the conservatives, see the report by E. Savishev in *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 15 June 1991; and Oleg Shenin, *Rodinu ne prodaval i menia obvinili v izmene* (Moscow, 1994), 44. For Gorbachev, see *Pravda*, 3 and 26 July 1991; his *Zhizn' i reformy*, 2:547, 548; his interview in *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 11 November 1992; quoted in Andrei Grachev, *Gorbachev* (Moscow, 2001), 228; and Vasilii Lipitskii in *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 3 August 1991. For his aides and supporters, see Georgii Shakhnazarov, *Tsena svobody: Reformatsiia Gorbacheva glazami ego pomoshchnika* (Moscow, 1993), 151; Vadim Medvedev, *V komande Gorbacheva: Vzglad iznutri* (Moscow, 1994), 130–31, 185–86, 207; and Sergei Alekseev, Fedor Burlatskii, and Stanislav Shatalin in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 30 January 1991. For an insider's view of these developments, see Otto Latsis, *Tshchatel'no splanirovannoe samoubiistvo* (Moscow, 2001), 349–70.

53. A. N. Iakovlev, *Gor'kaia chasha: Bol'shevizm i reformatsiia Rossii* (Iaroslavl', 1994), 17–22, 205–12.

mediately been the largest and only nationwide Soviet parties, far overshadowing the dozen of “pygmy parties,” as they were called, that were to dot the political landscape for years to come, some of them barely larger than the Moscow apartments in which they were conceived. (Based on a secret survey, Gorbachev believed that at least 5 million party members would remain with him in a new or recast party.)<sup>54</sup>

Nor is there any reason to doubt that both wings of the CPSU would have been formidable vote-getting parties in ongoing local, regional, and eventually national elections. Although a majority of Soviet citizens now held the existing Communist Party responsible for past and present ills, both divorcees could have escaped some of the onus by blaming the other, as they were already doing. Both would have had considerable electoral advantages of organization, experienced activists, media, campaign funds, and even voter deference. In surveys done in 1990, 56 percent of Soviet citizens distrusted the CPSU, but 81 percent distrusted all the other parties on the scene, and 34 percent still preferred the Communist Party over any other.<sup>55</sup> Given the growing polarization in the country, both offshoots of the old Communist Party would have been in a position to expand their electorate.

Constituencies for a social democratic party led by Gorbachev included those millions of Soviet citizens who now wanted political liberties but also a mixed or regulated market economy that preserved welfare and other elements of the old state system. In all likelihood, it would have been strongest among professional and other middle classes, skilled workers, pro-western intellectuals, and generally people who remained socialists but not communists.<sup>56</sup> As Soviet and Russian electoral results (as well as those in eastern Europe) showed in the late 1980s and 1990s, the kind of democratic communists and ex-communists who would have been the core of a social democratic party were fully capable of organizing campaigns and winning elections.

In this case, analytical hindsight can tell us something important about real possibilities. Gorbachev's failure to carve out of the CPSU what

54. Hahn, *Russia's Revolution*, 375; Mikhail Gorbachev and Zdeněk Mlynář, *Conversations with Gorbachev: On Perestroika, the Prague Spring, and the Crossroads of Socialism* (New York, 2002), 121; and similarly Gorbachev, *Zhizn' i reformy*, 2:578. One top aide thought that a formal split would not favor Gorbachev (Medvedev, *V komande*, 131), but several supporters and well-informed observers believed that a majority of party members, at least 9 million, would follow him. See, for example, Fedor Burlatskii, *Glotok svobody*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1997), 2:189–90; Latsis, *Tshchatel'no*, 345; German Diligenskii in *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, 7 July 1990; and Boris Pugaev in *Rossia*, 3–9 August 1991. It seems unlikely, however, that either wing of the CPSU would have had that many supporters in the event of a formal split; many communists probably would have joined other breakaway parties or quit altogether. But even a million or so registered members would have been ample.

55. S. Sheboldaev in *Pravda*, 26 September 1990; and White, *Gorbachev and After*, 256.

56. In early 1990, it was estimated that in a free election the Communist Party would have gotten 20 percent of the vote, nationalist and patriotic parties about 30 percent, and a social democratic party 50 percent. Sakwa, *Gorbachev and His Reforms*, 189. Had the CPSU split into two parties, it is reasonable to assume that the conservative wing would have gained much of the nationalist vote and the Gorbachev wing most of the social democratic vote.

in effect would have been a presidential party may have been his biggest political mistake.<sup>57</sup> If he had done so at the already deeply polarized (and essentially multiparty) Twenty-eighth Communist Party Congress in July 1990, to take a beckoning moment, he would not have been isolated politically when crises swept the country later in 1990 and 1991 and his personal popularity fell precipitously. In particular, if he had seized the initiative by taking such a bold step, which would have redefined and realigned the Soviet political landscape, many of his original supporters, perhaps even El'tsin, probably would not have deserted him.<sup>58</sup>

Gorbachev's orthodox communist opponents, contrary to most western accounts, also had plenty of potential as a Soviet electoral party. As proponents of "healthy conservatism," they had an expanding base of support in the millions of officials, factory workers, collective farmers, anti-western intellectuals, and other traditionalists aggrieved by Gorbachev's political and economic reforms.<sup>59</sup> As change eroded the social guarantees and other certainties of the old order, the number of "newly discontented," which had been growing since 1985, was bound to increase. Conservative communists had another growing appeal. The militant statist, or "patriotic," nationalism that had characterized their "communism" since the Stalin era was becoming a powerful ideological force in the country, especially in Russia.<sup>60</sup> (Indeed, both anti-Gorbachev communists and the now anti-communist El'tsin were already seizing upon it.)

Nor should it be thought that the anti-reform wing of the Soviet Communist Party was incapable of adapting to democratic politics. After their shocked petulance over the defeat of a few dozen apparat candidates in the March 1989 elections to the Congress of People's Deputies, conservative communists began to identify and organize their own constituents.<sup>61</sup> By 1990, they were a large electoral and parliamentary party in the Soviet Russian Republic. Whatever their private ambitions, they behaved in a

57. For similar arguments, see Miller, *Mikhail Gorbachev*, 147–48; and Brown, *Gorbachev*, 205–7, 272.

58. See, for example, the interview with El'tsin in *Moskovskie novosti*, 14 January 1990.

59. For similar arguments, see Miller, *Mikhail Gorbachev*, 146; and Kelley, "Gorbachev's Reforms and the Factionalization of Soviet Politics: Can the New System Cope with Pluralism?" in Huber and Kelley, eds., *Perestroika-Era Politics*, 93. For "healthy conservatism," see Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin*; and his remarks in *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, 6 February 1991, and in *Pravda*, 28 May 1991.

60. As the leader of the post-Soviet Communist Party later said, it has become a "party of patriots." Gennadii Ziuganov in *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, 24 October 1995. Similarly, see Ivan Polozkov, *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, 28 February 1991; E. Volodin, *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, 28 September 1991; and Aleksandr Prokhanov in *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 3 September 1991. For an early comment on the "newly discontented," see Aleksandr Gel'man in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 10 September 1986.

61. Their first reaction was to declare that "in such circumstances they will not run in these elections because there is a 100 percent certainty they will not be elected." To which Gorbachev replied: "Really?! It turns out that the party should refuse to participate in leadership and in elections?" *Materialy plenuma tsentral'nogo komiteta KPSS: 25 aprelia 1989 goda* (Moscow, 1989), 91. Evidently, they soon figured out that if one in five first secretaries had lost, four others had won, one way or another. See V. Boikov and Zh. Toshchenko in *Pravda*, 16 October 1989.

generally constitutional manner, even after El'tsin won executive power in the republic and communists suddenly became an opposition party for the first time in Soviet history.

The electoral potential of the Gorbachev wing of the CPSU, which dispersed after the end of the Soviet Union, can only be surmised, but his conservative enemies soon demonstrated their own capabilities. In opposition, as a Russian observer remarked several years later, they “got a second wind.” In 1993, they reemerged as the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and quickly became the largest and most successful electoral party in post-Soviet Russia. By 1996, it governed many regions and cities, had more deputies by far than any other party in the national parliament, and officially won 40 percent of the vote (some analysts thought even more) in a losing presidential campaign against El'tsin, who still had not been able to form a mass party.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, until 2003, it won more votes in each parliamentary election than it had in the preceding one. In short, if the reformability of the old Soviet Communist Party is to be judged by its electoral capacities, both of its wings were reformable.

Two major components of the Soviet system still need to be reconsidered—the statist economy and the Union. On close examination, no real case can be found in the specialized literature that the Soviet economy was unreformable. There is a near consensus that Gorbachev's economic reforms “failed miserably,” but even if true, it speaks to his leadership and policies, not the economic system itself.<sup>63</sup> As noted earlier, many western specialists not only assumed that the economy could be reformed but proffered their own prescriptions for reforming it.<sup>64</sup> Assertions that the Soviet economy had been unreformable were yet another afterthought inspired by Russian politicians (and their western patrons) who later decided to launch an all-out, “shock-therapy” assault on the old system.

Once again we must ask what is meant by *reform*. In the Soviet case, if it meant the advent of a fully privatized, entirely free-market capitalism, the economy was, of course, not reformable; it could only have been re-

62. For the post-1991 party, see Joan Barth Urban and Valerii D. Solovei, *Russia's Communists at the Crossroads* (Boulder, Colo., 1997); and Luke March, *The Communist Party in Post-Soviet Russia* (New York, 2002). For the observer, see Vitalii Tret'iakov in *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 24 April 2003.

63. Joseph R. Blasi et al., *Kremlin Capitalism: The Privatization of the Russian Economy* (Ithaca, 1997), 21. Similarly, see William Moskoff, *Hard Times: Impoverishment and Protest in the Perestroika Years* (Armonk, N.Y., 1993), 6; Miller, *Mikhail Gorbachev*, 205; and Robert Strayer, *Why Did the Soviet Union Collapse? Understanding Historical Change* (Armonk, N.Y., 1998), 115, 133.

64. And they continued to do so to the end. See, for example, Goldman, *What Went Wrong*, esp. 210–11; and Jeffrey Sachs quoted in Lynn D. Nelson and Irina Y. Kuzes, *Radical Reform in Yeltsin's Russia: Political, Economic, and Social Dimensions* (Armonk, N.Y., 1995), 22–23. The same was true of many Soviet economists who later became “radical reformers.” See, for example, V. A. Naishul, “Problema sozdaniia rynka v SSSR,” in F. M. Borodkin et al., eds., *Postizhenie: Sotsiologiia, sotsial'naia politika, ekonomicheskaiia reforma* (Moscow, 1989), 441–48. For explicit statements of the economy's reformability, see, for example, Kotz and Weir, *Revolution*, esp. chap. 5; and Michael Ellman and Vladimir Kontorovich, eds., *The Destruction of the Soviet Economic System: An Insiders' History* (Armonk, N.Y., 1998), esp. chap. 2.

placed in its entirety. By 1991, some self-appointed western advisers were already urging that outcome and never forgave Gorbachev for disregarding them.<sup>65</sup> But very few Soviet politicians or policy intellectuals, including radical reformers at that time, advocated such an economic system. Overwhelmingly, they shared Gorbachev's often and by 1990 emphatically stated goal of a "mixed economy" with a "regulated" but "modern full-blooded market" that would give "economic freedom" to people and "equal rights" to all forms of property ownership and still be called socialist.<sup>66</sup> Most of the disagreements among Soviet reformers, and with Gorbachev, continued to be over the methods and pace of the change.

Gorbachev's proposed mixed economy has been the subject of much western derision, and El'tsin's retort that the Soviet leader "wanted to combine things that cannot be combined"—or as a western historian put it, "like mating a rabbit with a donkey"—much applause.<sup>67</sup> But this too is unjustified. All modern capitalist economies have been mixed and regulated to various degrees, the combination of private and state ownership, market and nonmarket regulation, changing repeatedly over time. None of them has chosen actually to practice the fully "free market" their ideologues often preach. Moreover, economies with large state and private sectors had been the tsarist and Soviet Russian tradition, except during the years since the end of NEP in 1929.

Introducing "capitalist" elements into a reformed Soviet system was more difficult politically and economically than adding "socialist" ones to, for instance, American capitalism in the 1930s. But there was no inherent reason why nonstate, market elements could not have been added to the Soviet economy—private manufacturing firms, banks, service industries, shops, and farms alongside state and collective ones—and encouraged to compete and grow. Something similar had been done under far greater political constraints in communist eastern Europe and China. It would have required adhering to Gorbachev's principles of gradualism and of emphatic refusal to impose a way of life on people, even a reformed life. The reasons it did not happen in Soviet or post-Soviet Russia were primarily political, not economic, as were the causes of the country's growing economic crisis in 1990–91.

We must also ask if Gorbachev's economic policies really "failed miserably" because this suggests that the Soviet economy did not respond to his reform initiatives. As often as not, this too is an afterthought in the literature. Even as late as 1990, when Gorbachev's policies were already gen-

65. See, for example, Åslund, *How Russia*, 28; and Gorbachev's critical remarks about foreign advisers in *FBIS*, 27 February 1991, 81.

66. See, for example, Gorbachev in *Pravda*, 18 September 1990; and for radical reformers, S. S. Shatalin and N. Ia. Petrakov, in *Pravda*, 26 April 1990. Put another way, "For many Soviet economists, the ideal still remained the policies of NEP" or "socialism with a human face." Baturin et al., eds., *Epokha El'tsina*, 170.

67. Åslund, *How Russia*, 28; Robert Service, *A History of Twentieth-Century Russia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997), 492. For Gorbachev's comment on El'tsin's remark, see *Zhizn' i reformy*, 1:576; and for a sympathetic treatment of Gorbachev's proposal, Brown, *Gorbachev*, 137–40.

erating an ominous combination of growing budget deficits, inflation, consumer shortages, and falling production, a number of western economists nonetheless thought he was moving in the right direction.<sup>68</sup> In this case, however, we are interested in larger and more long-term questions.

If economic reform is a “transition” composed of necessary stages, Gorbachev had launched the entire process by 1990 in four essential respects. He had pushed through almost all the legislation needed for a comprehensive economic reformation.<sup>69</sup> He had converted large segments of the Soviet elite to market thinking to the extent that even the most neo-Stalinist candidate in the 1991 Russian presidential election conceded, “Today, only a crazy person can deny the need for market relations.”<sup>70</sup> Indeed, by discrediting long-standing ideological dogmas, legalizing private enterprises and property, and thus market relations, and personally lauding “lively and fair competition” for “each form of property,”<sup>71</sup> Gorbachev had largely freed the economy from the clutches of the proscriptive Communist Party apparatus. And as a direct result of these changes, the actual marketization, privatization, and commercialization of the Soviet economy were under way.

The latter developments require special attention because they are now almost always attributed to El'tsin and post-Soviet Russia. By 1990, the private businesses called cooperatives already numbered about 200,000, employed almost 5 million people, and accounted for 5 to 6 percent of GNP. For better or worse, state property was already in effect being privatized by nomenklatura officials and others. Commercial banks were springing up in many cities, and the first stock exchanges had appeared. New entrepreneurial and financial elites, including a soon-to-be formed “Young Millionaires Club,” were rapidly developing along with these market institutions. By mid-1991, an American correspondent was filing a series of reports on “Soviet capitalism.”<sup>72</sup> Western experts may dismiss Gorbachev's policies as failed half-measures, but later some Russian economists knew better: “It was during his years in power that all the basic

68. See, for example, Vasilii Leont'ev's letter in *Moskovskie novosti*, 14 January 1990; Ed A. Hewett's op-ed in *New York Times*, 25 March 1990; Richard Parker, “Inside the ‘Collapsing’ Soviet Economy,” *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1990, 68–80; and Padma Desai, *Perestroika in Perspective: The Design and Dilemmas of Soviet Reform* (Princeton, 1990), 106.

69. See, for example, the laws on land, ownership, and enterprises in *Izvestiia*, 7 March 1990; *Pravda*, 10 March 1990; and *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, 12 June 1990. Until 1991, the laws were still somewhat euphemistic about private property and related matters, but even one of Gorbachev's harshest economic critics acknowledges their importance. Åslund, *How Russia*, 30. For an overview, see Brown, *Gorbachev*, 137–50.

70. Albert Makashov in *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, 8 June 1991. Similarly, see Iurii Prokof'ev, “Ot ‘kul'tury’ skhvatki k kul'ture soglasii,” *Kommunist*, no. 13 (September 1990): 7; the now liberal Vadim Bakatin's account of his “metamorphosis” in *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 31 May 1991; and “Mneniia delegatov xviii s'ezda KPSS (rezul'taty oprosa),” *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia*, no. 11 (November 1990): 99–100. Ryzhkov later recalled this “evolution of views” in *Pravda*, 3 October 1992.

71. Gorbachev, *Izbrannye rechi i stat'i*, 7:573.

72. David Remnick in *Washington Post*, 7, 8, 9 July 1991. For the cooperatives, see Vladimir Tikhonov in *Argumenty i fakty*, 31 March–6 April 1990, and in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 8 August 1990; and Andrei Borodenkov in *Moskovskie novosti*, 1 July 1990.



forms of economic activity in modern Russia were born.”<sup>73</sup> The larger point is that they were born within the Soviet economy and thus were evidence of its reformability.

Finally, there is the question of the largest and most essential component of the old Soviet system—the Union or multinational state itself. Gorbachev was slow to recognize that Moscow’s hold on the fifteen republics was vulnerable to his political and economic policies, but by 1990 he knew that the fate of the Union would decide the outcome of all his reforms and “my own fate.”<sup>74</sup> During his final two years in office, he became a Lincolnesque figure determined to “preserve the Union”—in his case, however, not by force but by negotiating a transformation of the discredited “super-centralized unitary state” into an authentic, voluntary federation. When the Soviet Union ended in December 1991, for Gorbachev so did the evolutionary reformation he called perestroika.<sup>75</sup>

Was the Union reformable, as Gorbachev and many Russian politicians and intellectuals insisted before and after 1991? Two biases afflict western writing on this enormous “question of all questions.”<sup>76</sup> The anti-Sovietism of most western accounts, particularly American ones, inclines them to believe, with however much “hindsight bias,” that the Soviet Union was a doomed state. The other bias, probably unwitting, is again the language or formulation of the question. It is almost always said, perhaps in a tacit analogy with the end of the tsarist state in 1917, that the Union “collapsed” or “disintegrated,” words that imply inherently terminal causes and thus seem to rule out the possibility of a reformed Soviet state. But if we ask instead how and why the Union was *abolished, dissolved, disbanded*, or simply *ended*, the formulation leaves open the possibility that contingencies or subjective factors may have been the primary cause and therefore that a different outcome was possible.<sup>77</sup>

73. Mikhail Berger in *Moscow Times* (magazine ed.), 12 March 1995, 35. Similarly, see Iurii Burtin, “Dve privatizatsii: Kak my prishli k nomenklaturnomu kapitalizmu,” *Novoe vremia*, 1994, no. 20: 19; Egor Gaidar, *Gosudarstvo i evoliutsiia* (Moscow, 1995), 150; and R. Nureev and A. Runov, “Rossiia: Neizbezhna li deprivatizatsiia? Fenomen vlasti-sobstvennosti v istoricheskoi perspektive,” *Voprosy ekonomiki*, no. 6 (June 2002): 21. For the view that Gorbachev “lost his chance to introduce meaningful economic reforms,” see Michael Dobbs in *Washington Post*, 15 December 1991; and, similarly, Åslund, *Gorbachev’s Struggle*, 230.

74. See his public remarks in Lithuania, in January 1990, in *Nashi obshchie problemy vmeste i reshat’*: *Sbornik materialov o poezdke M. S. Gorbacheva v Litovskuiu SSR, 11–13 ianvaria 1990 goda* (Moscow, 1990).

75. For Gorbachev’s struggle, see *Soiuz možno bylo sokhranit’*. *Belaiia kniga: dokumenty i fakty o politike M. S. Gorbacheva po reformirovaniu i sokhraneniui mnogonatsional’nogo gosudarstva* (Moscow, 1995); and A. P. Nenarokov, ed., *Nesostoiaushiiia iubilei: Pochemu SSSR ne otpraznoval svoego 70-letiiia?* (Moscow, 1992), 331–508. For his characterization of the old state, see Gorbachev, *Zhizn’ i reformy*, 1:495–96, and, similarly, 2:530. For parallels with Lincoln, see Gorbachev and Mlynář, *Conversations*, 129; and for the end of perestroika, Mikhail Gorbachev, *Dekabr’–91: Moia pozitsiia* (Moscow, 1992), and V. T. Loginov, ed., *Piat’ let posle Belovezhia. Chto dal’she? Materialy kruglogo stola, sostoiavshegosia v Gorbachev-Fonde, 16 dekabria 1996 g.* (Moscow, 1997).

76. Leon Onikov quoted in Smirnov, *Uroki*, 288.

77. For similar points about language, see Nelson and Kuzes, *Radical Reform*, 8; and Robert V. Daniels, *Russia’s Transformation: Snapshots of a Crumbling System* (Lanham, Md.,

The standard western thesis that the Union was unreformable is based largely on a ramifying misconception. It assumes that the nationwide Communist Party apparatus, with its vertical organizational discipline imposing authority from above and demanding compliance from below, “alone held the federal union together.” Therefore, once the dictatorial party was disfranchised by Gorbachev’s reforms, there were no other integrative factors to offset centrifugal forces and the “disintegration of the Soviet Union was a foregone conclusion.” In short, “No party, no Union.”<sup>78</sup>

The role of the party should not be minimized, but other factors also bound the Union together, including other Soviet institutions. In significant respects, the Moscow state economic ministries, with their branches throughout the country, had become as important as party organizations.<sup>79</sup> And the integrative role of the all-Union military, with its own kind of discipline and assimilation, should not be underestimated. The state economy itself was even more important. Over many decades, the economies of the fifteen republics had become virtually one, sharing and depending upon the same natural resources, energy grids and pipelines, transportation, suppliers, producers, consumers, and subsidies. The result, as was commonly acknowledged, was a “single Soviet economic space.”

Nor should compelling human elements of integration be discounted. Official formulas boasting of a “Soviet people” and “Soviet nation” were overstated, but they were not, reliable sources assure us, merely an “ideological artifact.”<sup>80</sup> Though the Soviet Union was composed of scores of different ethnic groups, there were many millions of mixed families and some 75 million citizens, nearly a third of the population, lived outside their ethnic territories, including 25 million Russians. Shared historical experiences were also a unifying factor, such as the terrible losses and

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1998), 212–13. Not surprisingly, a major Sovietologist, having misformulated the issue, finds “the sudden collapse difficult to explain even in retrospect. Why did the huge edifice collapse?” Walter Laqueur, *The Dream That Failed: Reflections on the Soviet Union* (New York, 1994), 71. To illustrate the crucial difference in formulation, compare Richard Lourie, “Firebrands and Firebirds,” review of W. Bruce Lincoln, *Between Heaven and Hell: The Story of a Thousand Years of Artistic Life in Russia*, in *New York Times Book Review*, 5 April 1998, 26 (“Soviet Russia . . . collapsed of its own weight”) with the topic of a Russian roundtable discussion in *Nezavisimaia gazeta—Stsenarii*, 1 January 1997: “Who Broke Up the Soviet Union: History, the West, Yeltsin, Gorbachev?”

78. See, respectively, Stephen Kotkin, “Trashcanistan,” *New Republic*, 15 April 2002, 27; Pipes, *Communism*, 41; and Alec Nove, “The Fall of Empires: Russia and the Soviet Union,” in Geir Lundestad, ed., *The Fall of Great Powers: Peace, Stability, and Legitimacy* (Oslo, 1994), 144. Similarly, see Vera Tolz and Iain Elliot, eds., *The Demise of the USSR: From Communism to Independence* (London, 1995), 21; and Bunce, *Subversive Institutions*, 19, 36–37. To be fair, this is also the view of several serious Russian analysts. See, for example, Vladimir Sogrin, “Perestroika: Itogi i uroki,” *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost'*, 1992, no. 1: 147; Burlatskii, *Glotok*, 2: 155–56; and Andranik Migranian in *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 14 June 2000. But according to another Russian political scientist, “The defeat of the Communist system did not have to entail the breakup of the state.” Lilia Shevtsova, “Was the Collapse of the Soviet Union Inevitable?” in Anne de Tinguy, ed., *The Fall of the Soviet Empire* (Boulder, Colo., 1997), 76.

79. See Whitefield, *Industrial Power*.

80. Shlapentokh, *Normal*, 164–66; and, similarly, S. V. Cheshko, *Raspad Sovetskogo Soiuz: Etnopoliticheskii analiz* (Moscow, 1996), 140–41.

ultimate victory in World War II, or “Great Patriotic War,” as was the language of the Moscow center. More than 60 percent of non-Russians spoke Russian fluently and most of the others had assimilated some of Russia’s language and culture though the all-Union educational system and media.<sup>81</sup>

Given the right reform policies and other circumstances, these multiple integrative elements, along with habits of living with Russia formed before and since 1917, were enough to hold most of the Soviet Union together without the Communist Party dictatorship. Indeed, a decade after the end of the Soviet Communist state, an American historian traveling through its former territories still found “Sovietness at almost every turn.”<sup>82</sup> If nothing else, tens of millions of Soviet citizens had much to lose in the event of a breakup of the Union. That understanding no doubt helps explain the result of the March 1991 referendum, which was, an American specialist confirms, an “overwhelming vote for the Union.”<sup>83</sup>

It is also true that the voluntary Soviet federation proposed by Gorbachev would have meant fewer than the fourteen non-Russian republics. He hoped otherwise but acknowledged the prospect by enacting a new Law on Secession in April 1990. The tiny Baltic republics of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, annexed by Stalin’s Red Army in 1940, were almost certain to choose renewed independence, and western Moldova reunion with Romania (though it changed its mind after 1991).<sup>84</sup> One or two of the three small Transcaucasian republics also might have seceded depending on whether bitter enemies Armenia and Azerbaijan sought Russia’s protection against the other and whether Georgia decided it needed Moscow’s help in preserving its own multiethnic state.

Even so, all of these small nationalities were on the Soviet periphery and the remaining eight to ten republics constituted more than 90 percent of the old Union’s territory, population, and resources. They were more than enough to form and sustain a new Soviet Union. Even fewer grouped around Russia would have been adequate. Indeed, according to a non-Russian leader who participated in the abolition of the Soviet state a few months later, a new Union could “consist of four republics.”<sup>85</sup>

81. For the statistics, see Barsenkov, *Vvedenie*, 132; and Shlapentokh, *Normal*, 158. More than a decade after the breakup, Russian language and Soviet education were still powerful forces in Central Asia. See the report by Zamira Eshanova in *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Newslines*, 13 November 2002.

82. Stephen Kotkin, “Trashcanistan,” 27. In 1996, Gorbachev made a similar point about the former Soviet Union: “De facto the country still lives even though de jure it no longer exists.” *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 25 December 1996.

83. Suny, *Revenge of the Past*, 150. Even Russian anticommunist critics of Gorbachev agree. See, for example, Sergei Roy in *Moscow News*, 26 November–2 December 1998; and the group statement in *Nezavisimaia gazeta—Stsenarii*, 23 May 1996.

84. For the Law of Secession, see *Pravda*, 7 April 1990; and for Gorbachev on the “process of ‘divorce,’” *Zhizn’ i reformy*, 1:520–21. Some historians think that if an acceptable union treaty had been offered in early 1989, the Baltic republics would have remained. See R. Kh. Simonian, “Strany Baltii i raspad SSSR: O nekotorykh mifakh i stereotipakh massovogo soznaniia,” *Voprosy istorii*, no. 12 (December 2002): 34–37.

85. Stanislav Shushkevich in *FBIS*, 30 September 1991, 70.

Popular opinion may have been overwhelmingly pro-Union, but after early 1990, when regional parliamentary elections devolved considerable power from the Moscow center, it was the leaders and elites of the republics who would decide their future. There is strong evidence that a majority of them also wanted to preserve the Union. This sentiment was clearly expressed in negotiations for a new Union Treaty that Gorbachev began directly with the willing leaders of nine Soviet republics—Russia, Ukraine, Belorussia, the five Central Asian republics, and Azerbaijan—in April 1991, a crisis-ridden time somewhat beyond the period analyzed here but therefore all the more significant.

The negotiations, known as the Novo-Ogarevo process, resulted in an agreement to form a new “Union of Soviet Sovereign Republics.” Scheduled to be signed formally on 20 August 1991, the treaty was initialed by all nine republic leaders, including the three who would abolish the Soviet Union only a few months later—El'tsin of Russia, Leonid Kravchuk of Ukraine, and Stanislav Shushkevich of Belorussia.<sup>86</sup> Gorbachev had to cede more power than he wanted to the republics, but the treaty preserved an all-Union state, elected presidency and parliament, military, and economy. It was so finalized that even disputes over seating at the signing ceremony, which was to be followed by a new constitution and elections, had been resolved and special paper for the text and souvenir stamps agreed upon.<sup>87</sup>

The familiar argument that Novo-Ogarevo's failure to save the Soviet Union proved its unreformability therefore makes no sense. Those negotiations were successful; and, like Gorbachev's other reforms, they developed within the Soviet system, legitimized by the popular mandate of the March referendum and conducted by the established multinational leaderships of most of the country. Instead, the Novo-Ogarevo process should be seen as the kind of elite consensus, or “pact-making,” that many political scientists say is necessary for the successful democratic reformation of a political system.<sup>88</sup> That is how even a leading pro-El'tsin democrat anticipated the signing of the new treaty—as a “historic event” that could be

86. For the treaty, see *Izvestiia*, 15 August 1991; and for strong pro-Union statements by El'tsin and Kravchuk at the negotiations, *Natsional'nye interesy*, 2001, no. 2–3:80, 88. It is often argued that Ukraine would not have actually signed the treaty, but Gorbachev thought otherwise, as do a Russian and an American specialist. See Barsenkov, *Vvedenie*, 198; and Hale, “Ethnofederalism.”

87. Mikhail Gorbachev, *On My Country and the World* (New York, 2000), 132. For the seating, see also Gorbachev's press conference of 16 August 2001, in *Johnson's Russia List*, 20 August 2001.

88. For this interpretation, see Hahn, *Russia's Revolution*, chap. 8; and, similarly, Henry E. Hale, *The Strange Death of the Soviet Union*, Ponars Series no. 12 (Cambridge, Mass., March 1999). For a similar interpretation, though in different language, see Feodor Burlatsky, “Who or What Broke Up the Soviet Union?” in Metta Spencer, ed., *Separatism: Democracy and Disintegration* (Lanham, Md., 1998), 146. Several scholars argue, on the other hand, that the treaty would have not worked. See, for example, Miller, *Mikhail Gorbachev*, 198; Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization*, 390, 422–25; and, less emphatically, Hough, *Democratization*, 424–28.

“as long-lived as the American Declaration of Independence, and serve as the same reliable political and legal basis of the renovated Union.”<sup>89</sup>

In other words, the treaty did not fail because the Union was unreformable but because a small group of high-level Moscow officials staged an armed coup on 19 August to stop its successful reform. (Nor was the coup inevitable, but that is another story.)<sup>90</sup> Though the putsch quickly collapsed, primarily because its leaders lacked the resolve to use the military force they had amassed in Moscow, its fallout dealt a heavy blow to the Novo-Ogarevo process. It profoundly weakened Gorbachev and his central government, emboldened El'tsin and Kravchuk, and made other republic leaders wary of Moscow's unpredictable behavior. According to most western accounts, it eliminated any remaining possibility of saving the Union. (Such accounts overlook the compliant, wait-and-see position taken by several republic leaders during the tank putsch in the Soviet capital, which suggests that even at this late date merely a threat of force by Moscow would have kept those communist bosses-turned-nationalists in the Union.)

In fact, not even the failed but calamitous August coup extinguished the political impulse to preserve the Union or leading Soviet reformers' expectations that it would still be saved. In September, some 1,900 deputies from twelve Soviet republics resumed their participation in sessions of the Union Congress. And as late as November 1991, El'tsin assured the public, “The Union will live!”<sup>91</sup> Seven republics, including Russia, continued to negotiate with Soviet President Gorbachev—a majority, not counting the now independent Balts—and, on 25 November, they seemed to agree on yet another treaty. More confederal than federative, this new agreement still provided for a Union state, presidency, parliament, economy, and military.<sup>92</sup> Two weeks later, it too was aborted by a coup, a successful one carried out by even fewer conspirators but with greater resolve.

89. Anatolii Sobchak quoted in Brown, *Gorbachev*, 293; similarly, see Sobchak in *Moskovskie novosti*, 18–25 August 1996, and Vladimir Lukin quoted in Hough, *Democratization*, 393.

90. To take a contingency considered earlier, according to a widely respected Russian economist, if the G-7 had not sent Gorbachev home from London in July 1991 “with empty hands,” without the financial assistance he desperately needed, the plotters would not have moved against him. Nikolai Shmelev, “Piat' let reform—piat' let krizisa,” *Svobodnaia mysl'*, 1996, no. 7:62, and his “Desiat' let, kotorye perevernuli mir,” *Svobodnaia mysl'*, 1999, no. 2:77. Indeed, the plotters took steps in June and July to undermine his requests for western aid. See Hahn, *Russia's Revolution*, 406. For the rejection by the G-7 and the “big humiliation” it inflicted on Gorbachev, see Reddaway and Gliniski, *Tragedy of Russia's Reforms*, 78–82.

91. See, for example, the post-August statements by Sobchak, Shushkevich, and Aleksandr Iakovlev in *FBIS*, 13 September 1991, 33; 30 September 1991, 70; and 2 October 1991, 33; Roi Medvedev's account of the Congress in *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia*, no. 2 (March–April 2003): 167, and of his own expectations in *Literaturnaia Rossiia*, 4 April 2003; and for El'tsin, Dzhu'etto Keza, *Proshchai, Rossiia!* (Moscow, 1997), 110. Indeed, after August, El'tsin was still considering having himself made president of the Soviet Union. Boris El'tsin, *Zapiski prezidenta* (Moscow, 1994), 154–55. Gorbachev, of course, continued to insist that the Union could be saved. See his *Zhizn' i reformy*, 2: chap. 44.

92. For the text, see *Pravda*, 27 November 1991.

We must conclude, then, that just as we found no conceptual reasons for believing the Soviet system was unreformable, there are no empirical ones either. As the historical developments reconsidered here show, by 1991 most of the system was in a process of far-reaching democratic and market reformation. The Soviet Union under Gorbachev was, of course, not yet fully reformed, but it was in full “transition,” a term usually reserved for the post-Soviet period. All that remains of the unreformability axiom is the insistence that because Gorbachev’s reforms were avowedly pro-Soviet and pro-socialist, they were merely a “fantasy” or “chimera.”<sup>93</sup> It is, of course, ideological bias, not historical analysis.

Why, contrary to the assertions of so many specialists for so many years, did the system turn out to be remarkably reformable? Was it really some kind of “political miracle,” as an American historian later wrote?<sup>94</sup> Important elements of a full explanation include the enduring power of anti-Stalinist ideas dating back to the 1920s and even to 1917; the legacies of Khrushchev’s policies, among them the birth of a proto-reform party inside the Communist Party; the Soviet elite’s increasing exposure to the west and thus awareness of alternative ways of life (both socialist and capitalist); profound changes in society that were de-Stalinizing the system from below; growing social and economic problems that further promoted proreform sentiments in the high nomenklatura; and, not to be minimized, of course, Gorbachev’s exceptional leadership. But there was an equally crucial factor.

Most western specialists had long believed that the Soviet system’s basic institutions were too “totalitarian” or otherwise rigged to be fundamentally reformed. In fact, the system had been constructed all along in a dualistic way that made it potentially reformable, even, so to speak, reform-ready. Formally, it had most of the institutions of a representative democracy—a constitution that included provisions for civil liberties, a legislature, elections, a judiciary, a federation. But inside or alongside each of those components were “counterweights” that nullified their democratic content, most importantly the Communist Party’s political monopoly, single-candidate ballots, censorship, and police repression.<sup>95</sup> To

93. Martin Malia in *New York Times*, 3 September 1998; and Stephen Kotkin, “Truth and Consequences,” *New Republic*, 31 March 2003, 34. Similarly, see Jeffrey W. Hahn’s review of Brendan Kiernan, *The End of Soviet Politics: Elections, Legislatures, and the Demise of the Communist Party*, in *Slavic Review* 52, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 851. Many otherwise diverse books on the period are largely informed by this outlook. See, for example, Malia, *Soviet Tragedy*; Dunlop, *Rise of Russia*; and Åslund, *Gorbachev’s Struggle*. Some western scholars have treated the Gorbachev years as a “transition.” See, for example, Huber, “Introduction. The New Soviet Legislature: How Ideas and Institutions Matter,” in Huber and Kelley, eds., *Perestroika-Era Politics*, 3; Archie Brown, “From Democratization to ‘Guided Democracy,’” *Journal of Democracy* 12, no. 4 (October 2001): 35; and Hahn, *Russia’s Revolution*, chap. 8. The word (*perekhod*) and concept were regularly applied to Gorbachev’s reforms by Soviet writers at the time.

94. Strayer, *Why Did the Soviet Union Collapse?* 113.

95. I borrow the term *counterweights* from John N. Hazard, *The Soviet System of Government*, 5th ed. (Chicago, 1980), chap. 13. Originally published in 1957, it was the first to develop this important insight. For a similar and earlier approach, but focusing on the offi-

begin a process of democratic reform, all that was needed was a will and a way to remove the counterweights.

Gorbachev and his closest aides understood the duality, which he characterized as “democratic principles in words and authoritarianism in reality.” To democratize the system, he later observed, “it wasn’t necessary to invent anything new,” only, as an adviser remarked, to transform the democratic components of the Soviet Union “from decoration into reality.” This was true of almost all of Gorbachev’s reforms, though the most significant example was, as he emphasized, the “transfer of power from the hands of the Communist Party, which had monopolized it, into the hands of those to whom it should have belonged according to the Constitution—to the soviets through free elections.”<sup>96</sup> Not only did its dualistic institutions make the Soviet system highly reformable, without them the peaceful democratization and other transformations of the Gorbachev years probably would not have been possible, and certainly not as rapid or historic.<sup>97</sup>

A final issue should be emphasized, though it cannot be explored here. If the argument presented in this article is substantially valid, it also casts doubt on most of the prevailing explanations of the end of the Soviet Union, which assume in one way or another that it was unreformable. But that is an even larger and more controversial question awaiting our reconsideration.

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cial ideology, see Barrington Moore, Jr., *Soviet Politics—The Dilemmas of Power: The Role of Ideas in Social Change* (1950; reprint, New York, 1965), 28, 339.

96. See, respectively, Gorbachev, *Izbrannye rechi i stat'i*, 6:352; Gorbachev, *Zhizn' i reformy*, 1:390; A. S. Cherniaev in *10 let bez SSSR: Materialy konferentsii i kruglykh stolov, provedennykh obshchestvenno-politicheskimi tsentromi Gorbachev-Fonda v 2001 g.* (Moscow, 2002), 8; and Gorbachev, *Zhizn' i reformy*, 1:423. Thus, one American Sovietologist commented at the time, with considerable surprise, on “the coming to life of institutions that most people regarded as dead, a sham, a grotesque caricature of what they ought to be.” Donald W. Treadgold, “Mikhail Sergeevich and the World of 1990,” in Wiczynski, ed., *Gorbachev Reader*, 43.

97. For a similar point, see T. H. Rigby quoted in Lilia Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality* (Washington, D.C., 1999), 6.